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ABSTRACT

A restructured school setting necessitates a major change in the principal's role. For example, the principal must not only espouse certain values, but practice them at the "in-use" level as well. This paper compares and contrasts the leadership styles of two principals who participated in the implementation of a restructuring effort, the Accelerated Schools Project. The study was set in a rural Louisiana school that served a high proportion of at-risk students. Data were gathered through informal interviews with and observations of 26 teachers and through indepth interviews with 6 teachers and the current principal. In 1991, the former principal and the teachers chose to implement the project with the support of the central-office administration. The second principal entered at the start of the project's second year. She recognized the importance of teacher inquiry for encouraging and developing innovation and trusted them to teach in creative ways. Teachers reported that the first principal did not apply the project's philosophy to the in-use level; teachers remained isolated and were not included in decision making; and some teachers continued to use traditional remedial work for at-risk children. According to teachers' accounts, the second principal showed that she was a team player, exhibited flexibility and took risks, treated the teachers as professionals, and trusted them to use creative strategies. In summary, restructuring the principal-teacher relationship is a key element in school restructuring. (Contains 12 references.) (LMI)

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TRANSFORMING TEACHERS' WORK:

THE IMPACT OF TWO PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP STYLES

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TRANSFORMING TEACHERS' WORK:

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OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this paper is to compare and contrast the leadership styles of two principals who were involved in the implementation of a restructuring process, the Accelerated Schools Project. Focusing on these patterns of leadership provided insight into how the role of the principal impacts teachers' capacities to make improvements and changes on classroom and school wide levels. The school used in this study was in the fourth year of implementing the model. The change of principals occurred after the first year of involvement in the process. The format of this paper to be presented at a paper session, includes the objectives, theoretical framework, methodology and data sources, findings, conclusions, and educational implications of the study.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The accelerated schools model was inspired by Henry M. Levin and his colleagues at Stanford University in 1986 to address the growing urgent needs of students caught in an at-risk situation by transforming traditional strategies to gifted and talented ones. As Christensen (1995) states, "To do this, all members of an accelerated school work together to systematically address selected prioritized challenges, whose resolution will provide more enriched learning environments and move students in the school to a higher level of achievement and learning (p. 4). For this transformation to occur, considerable changes are required from all members of the school community, particularly the principal.

Traditionally, the principal has been the central actor at the school site. The role of the principal has been typically to act alone in managing the school and making decisions. In this traditional scenario, teachers generally "...work within the isolation of their own classrooms and have little input in school side operations" (Accelerated Schools Newsletter, p. 1). Such isolation creates a lack of participation, purpose, focus, and action on the part of the teachers. As a result, there tends to be little creativity, experimentation, and innovation from within the school site.

On the other hand, a restructured school setting necessitates a major change in the principal's role. In the restructured model, the principal's role changes from that of an authoritarian figure to a transformational and facilitative role. Christensen (1995) notes, "In an accelerated school, the principal's primary role is expected to be that of a transformational leader, one who contributes toward and enables change in the school" (p. 5). As Murphy (1991) maintains, "Thus, in many ways the principal is the nexus of restructuring efforts--accepting additional autonomy and accountability on behalf of the school and passing it through to the teaching staff (and to the larger community)" (p. 26).

One of the keys to developing the capacity for school site change impacting the learning environment involves "espousing" and practicing at an "in-use" level. Argyris, Putnam, and Smith (1985) purport organizational, social, as well as individual change may come about when people espouse certain values and practice them at

an in-use level. Explanations of these concepts are based on two theories of action (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith). One theory, the espoused, refers to what the individual claims he or she believes and what he or she would do in certain circumstances and situations. The second theory, in-use, refers to the actions actually taken in those situations.

For transformation to occur, the principal needs to facilitate and support at an in-use level an educational environment for teachers to engage in dialogue to make free and informed choices on how to build on the strengths of others. Argyris, Putnam, and Smith (1985) describe a situation in which there is opportunity for free and informed choices and public testing of ideas as an "unfreezing" process. The school members begin to publicly test their ideas and opinions. Argyris, Putnam, and Smith contend that members of systems can use reflection to: First, unfreeze to begin open and honest communication; second, to reflect on their own lives and world; and third, to begin to learn how to create changes that are "...more congruent with the values and theories they espouse" (p. 98). Therefore, teachers are empowered to take control in their work place which leads him or her to a particular course of action for transformation.

METHODS AND DATA SOURCE

The design for this research was the case study method based on qualitative inquiry. This method served as an overall research approach to guide the direction of the case study.

The school utilized in this study is located in a rural

section of southeast Louisiana and is primarily comprised of at-risk students. The school began the accelerated schools process during the 1991-1992 school year. The qualitative research included informal interviews with and observations of 26 teachers during the 1994-1995 school year. Of the 26 teachers, six were selected for more intensive interviews and more extensive observations. The current principal, Ms. Gomez, was interviewed in an indepth manner.

To actually capture the voices and behaviors of the principals and teachers, an interview protocol was used that focused on the capacities of teachers in their work before and after the Accelerated Schools Project began. Specific questions addressed how teachers were able to relate to one another in regard to their work in the classroom and school, the activities that actually worked best with the students, and teachers were asked to relate specific incidences illustrating the role of the principal.

Sifting through the raw data to find the underlying meanings of the words was similar to the difficult and tedious task of pulling a tapestry apart thread by thread and then putting it back together again. Unraveling the threads of the tapestry provided the opportunity to get underneath the surface and discover what had made this school look and feel the way it is now as contrasted from the past four years. The interviews and observations of each teacher and principal were viewed through a "restructuring lens" to determine if they were operating at the espoused or in-use level.

FINDINGS

The findings describe how the leadership styles of two principals effected teachers work. External forces as well as internal forces in the school influenced changes in the teachers' role. The external forces, such as the efforts by the central office to consolidate and restructure schools and pressures from new businesses in the area, played a role in the creating changes at this school. Internal forces included: the leadership of the principal, use of innovative teaching strategies, the breakdown of divisions among teachers, and the initiation of the Accelerated Schools Project as a restructuring process. The teachers' willingness to use and share innovative ideas for school wide curriculum change and the current principal, Ms. Gomez's, support of teachers' empowerment to reflect on these new strategies appeared to be the impetus for transformation of teachers work.

External Forces

The late 1980's brought upheaval to the rural community in Southeast Louisiana. Almost simultaneously as new chemical and oil industries were moving into the area, the central office reorganized the school district which resulted in the consolidation of three schools. The central office, according to interviews from the principal, Ms. Gomez, and the teachers, appeared to be responding to the industries' pressures for changes in the curriculum of the schools. The new industries thought the changes were necessary to provide a future work force and to provide racial equity. The outcome was a push by the central office toward

innovation and technology in the academics, demographic make-up, and grade level structure of the schools in the river parish. As a result, two neighboring schools both predominately African-American and serving kindergarten through sixth grade, were consolidated to form one school community. Before the consolidation, the school was approximately 35% African-American and had a predominately Caucasian faculty.

After consolidation, the school served approximately 460 pre-kindergarten through second grade children. Another school served children from third through fifth and yet another served children from sixth through eight grades. The racial and ethnic make-up of children at the school became approximately 65% African-American, 34% Caucasian, and 1% Hispanic. Because many of the children's family incomes fell below the poverty line, over 80% of the children were on the free or reduced lunch program subsidized by the federal government.

Extended families, grandparents, single mothers, and other relatives care for many of the children rather than the traditional two-parent family. Some of the parents are illiterate and, therefore, have difficulty helping children with homework. According to Ms. Gomez and other teachers, the central office placed the school in the lowest quadrant of the district. The placement was based upon the mothers' educational and socio-economical levels.

At the time of consolidation, the children and the teachers were "pulled" from their schools and neighborhoods to satisfy the

mandate of the central office. Ms. Gomez, the current principal of the school, explained that when she arrived three years earlier the teachers were physically present, but not so in spirit. The school represented three different cultures, faculties, and methods of teaching and learning under one roof--there was no unity, harmony, or vision. Cliques and tensions isolated the teachers, activities, and programs within the curriculum.

In 1991, approximately four year after the consolidation, the former principal, Mr. John, and the teachers chose to implement the Accelerated Schools Project with the approval and encouragement of the central office. The project, a model to help schools transform the ways they work in order to improve teaching and learning, seemed to be congruent with the district's need for restructuring. The important point to be made, however, is that the former principal, Mr. John, the former assistant principal, Ms. Foster, and the central office actually worked together to make the two restructuring movements compatible and work successfully together. The teachers also noted that the central office made available numerous workshops for staff development and innovative programs. Ms. Foster worked with the central office to match the goals and vision of both transformations.

The two other schools (housing the third through fifth grades and the sixth through eight grades) organized because of the consolidation also began the accelerated schools process. These two schools found it very difficult to work with both processes. In addition, the two principals of these schools were not as

supportive as both Mr. John and Ms. Gomez. Teachers found it difficult to implement the philosophy and process of accelerated schools in the other two schools. As a result, at the end of their first year in the accelerated schools process, they chose to drop out of the project.

Therefore, the conclusions may be drawn that the principal and central office's support was a necessary ingredient for transformation. The school administrators also had focused upon change. However, even though the accelerated process supports teacher empowerment, the central office still appeared in control of the teachers' work and the direction of change. Apparently the central office's decision to support the school used in the study and not the other schools indicated that the teachers remained within a hierarchial system of control. Rosenholtz (1989) argues that communication through which teachers gain a sense of control in their work is paramount for teachers attempting to increase consensus regarding teaching and learning in the workplace.

Internal Forces

The former and current principals played key roles in the school's restructuring efforts. Mr. John, the former principal, apperantly espoused supporting teachers. However, limited change occurred under his leadership because he did not actually practice at an in-use level what he espoused. As for Ms. Gomez, the current principal, teachers believed and observed her leadership at both levels--espoused and in-use. The following discriptions of both

principals provide evidence that validate the changes in teachers work.

A Former Principal's Role: Effects on Teachers' Work

Mr. John, the former principal, was in his last year of principalship when the Accelerated Schools Project began at the school. At this time, Mr. John was working with the central office's restructuring efforts. When he was absent, the assistant principal, Ms. Foster, assisted the teachers with the Accelerated Schools Project. His acceptance and espoused support of the accelerated schools philosophy and process was voiced, but his absence at the school may have created a void in the school's capacity building process for change. This process usually takes from one to four years according to the Accelerated Schools Project (Hopfenberg et al., 1993). This void may have meant that unity and empowerment in the school was not developing. Murphy (1991) argues that the principal is the key ingredient during school restructuring in helping to change the role of the teacher.

During the first year of the accelerated process, the teachers were not fully espousing and practicing the philosophy of the project; some were doing innovative teaching but they were teaching as if behind closed doors. Teachers were isolated in classrooms and could not make a difference in the curriculum on a school wide level. The teachers communicated little and shared less about programs, events, and activities.

Dysfunctional patterns of tension and dissension were still very much alive. Looking back, the teachers believed that they

were divided in their curriculum approaches and confused about the Accelerated Schools Project's inquiry process necessary for problem solving. Perhaps it could be said that the teachers' work still reflected the reproduction of drill-and-skill classroom teaching that was contrary to the assumptions of the accelerated schools philosophy.

Apple (1982) suggests that educators breaking the crust of traditional practices should raise critical questions concerning selection of the information, how it is organized and how it is taught. Such questions ultimately are the responsibility of not just the on-site administrator, but the teachers and the school community. Based upon interviews with the six teachers and the principal, the breaking of traditional attitudes, beliefs, and practices appeared to be only partial during the first year of the accelerated process at the school. Through the eyes of the researchers, the teachers apparently were still working behind the closed doors of their classrooms to design the innovative projects and creating active and intellectual learning situations for children. However, such conditions left little room for the teachers' voices to be heard and shared with colleagues on a school wide level.

Thus, after the first year of the accelerated process, a pessimistic picture was still painted for teachers to rethink or redesign the curriculum. Despite the assistance from the central office and the principal, Mr. John, neither facilitated complete transformation because teachers perceived that they were still not

yet empowered. Apple (1985) indicates that workers' attempts at transformation may turn against them when facilitators retain control; the teachers' struggle to make changes may have meant further stifling of their creativity.

The New Principal's Role: Evidence of Leadership and Empowerment

The role of the new principal, Ms. Gomez, deserves closer scrutiny because she opened the avenues for transformation. The role of this principal as a team player facilitated the teachers' innovative work. She also supported teacher inquiry at the classroom and cadre or school wide levels which ultimately led to the redesign of the curriculum. As St. John, Miron, and Davidson (1992) note, "Changes in the role of the principal, from a manager or instructional leader to a facilitator...are integral to most recent school restructuring [projects] such as accelerated schools." (p. 3).

Ms. Gomez became the principal at the beginning of the school's second year in the Accelerated Schools Project. Through Ms. Gomez's leadership and belief in the philosophy of empowering and unifying teachers to become researchers and innovators, the time and space was found for inquiry to move the school toward overall change. Ms. Gomez helped the teachers to be risk-takers while supporting their innovative projects that she believed represented "gifted and talented" strategies. Christensen(1993) sees such time, space, strategies and roles for teachers as new configurations in school change. Ms. Gomez reflected,

I think leadership has a whole lot to do with this school and what happens at the school. I think I have acted as a facilitator and I have encouraged teachers to become researchers and have created opportunities for teachers to do that. I came in as principal when they were already in the process. Good things were going on, but I think they have matured. Whether it is because of the leadership of the [accelerated schools] process, I am not really sure.

Christensen(1993) suggests,

As a facilitator of change, the principal in a restructured school has to be flexible and open to change whenever it may occur. Trying something new or supporting one's staff in a new venture necessitates a renewed sense of risk on the part of the principal. (p. 23).

One of the teachers, Ms. Gala, believed that the new principal made a difference in the accelerated schools process when she stated:

Well, one of the things I saw since accelerated schools was that we had a change of principal. The principal makes a big difference in the school. We had a very rigid principal before. I have a principal now that is amazing. I wanted to decorate this room. With the principal

before this was kind of difficult. You were much more limited. This principal gives me big boards for murals; she even goes and buys the big boards herself, so we can decorate the front of the school. Now that is amazing because that is a part of the school now and that is what art is!

Ms. Gomez exhibited flexibility and risk-taking with the teachers so that they designed teaching and learning as they saw best for the children. Another teacher interviewed stated:

With the curriculum, the principal gives us flexibility. I think a strength for the school in regards to teaching and learning is that you as a teacher are able to teach how you feel benefits your children the most. If I truly believe it is going to benefit my children, and I can explain my purpose behind it, I will be allowed to do it. Other teachers who come in [to visit from other schools] and observe don't seem to have that freedom.

The above quotes reflect an understanding of the transformation that was evolving at the school. The principal provided empowerment so that the teachers could control what and how they taught. The quotes also illustrate that the researchers found that the teachers were considered professionals by the principal--professionals who could make decisions as to what knowledge is best for the children and how that knowledge could best be made

meaningful for them. Hammond (1988) states that through participatory management and teacher empowerment, the on-site administrator, even though limited by traditional values, school boards, state policies, and other outside forces, can function as an instructional leader and facilitator which allows teachers to grow professionally. As a facilitator, the principal encourages teachers to make shared decisions that result in transformation of teaching and learning methods at the school.

The teachers believed that Ms. Gomez trusted them as professionals to teach in creative ways. As a result, the teachers felt positive about their work; they were more inclined to be cooperative with the principal and with each other. Ms. Rogers, one of the teachers interviewed, observed that:

> I think a major strength at this school is that the teachers tend to be very cooperative. Our administrator here is a very trusting, good, and very capable person. The principal gives self-esteem to teachers.

To summarize, Ms. Gomez helped to recognize the importance of teacher inquiry for encouraging and developing innovation. In this way, she identified the values of what the teachers were already doing when she arrived at the school. She acted as a jump start for them to connect their positive activities and programs together in a holistic curriculum rather than a fragmented one. In referring to restructured schools, Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) noted that, "...the centrality of the principal in working with

teachers to shape the school as a workplace in relation to shared goals, teacher collaboration, teacher learning opportunities, teacher certainty, teacher commitment, and student learning" (p. 161) is crucial.

From the informal as well as formal observations and interviews, it was clear that the teachers have been empowered in their work to take risks, to use trial and error, research, and innovation. From their attitudes and behaviors they appeared to have taken the work empowerment for more than just tantalizing slogan. At first the work empowerment may have been interpreted ambivalently and caused further tensions among the faculty because they were still polarized. Testing out the meaning of the work became important for the teachers. They became autonomous risk-takers as well as innovative and creative in developing new teaching strategies, curriculum programs, and policies within the school. Personal and professional commitments to be responsible and share that responsibility to the students and parents were a part of their experiment. Therefore, through the teachers' empowerment and responsibility, a transformation occurred both in the classrooms and the whole school. As a result of the principal's support of empowerment and innovation, windows were opened for fresh hope for what they could accomplish together and what successes the children could achieve.

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of the study provided evidence that the previous principal, Mr. John, operated at an espoused level in

implementing the accelerated schools process. The following patterns emerged:

First, he accepted the philosophy of the process but only practiced at an espoused level rather than an in-use level.

Second, teachers innovative activities were limited to the classroom. This continued isolation in classrooms prevented them in making a difference in the curriculum on a school wide level.

Third, there was little communication and sharing among teachers about programs, events, and activities.

Fourth, dysfunctional patterns of tension and division were still very much alive among the teaching staff.

Fifth, the traditional remedial work for at-risk children was still being used by some teachers.

The following patterns that emerged in regard to the current principal, Ms. Gomez, showed evidence that she practiced the accelerated schools process at an in-use level as well as at an espoused level. Those behavioral patterns included:

First, the teachers perceived the role of the principal as that of a team player who was a catalyst for change.

Second, the teachers expressed that the principal exhibited flexibility and risk taking attributes that encouraged them to be innovative.

Third, the teachers felt that the principal considered them as professionals to make decisions on what and how they taught.

Fourth, the teachers maintained that the principal trusted them in their professional work to use creative strategies.

EDUCATIONAL IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The principal is in the position of great influence to impact the changing needs of the teachers and students in the school. The transformational leadership style as compared to an authoritarian style creates the avenues for innovativeness in the classroom. The principal that operated at an espoused level thus stifled creativity and encouraged teacher isolation in the classroom. Whereas the more supporting and facilitating principal working at espoused and in-use levels provided opportunities for recreating and redesigning the curriculum on a school wide level.

This study gave evidence that the redesigning of the work relationship between the principal and the teachers is a key ingredient in school restructuring. As David (1989) states, "The shift is from a system characterized by controlling and directing what goes on at the next lower level to guiding and facilitating professionals in their quest for more productive learning opportunities for students" (p. 28).

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